

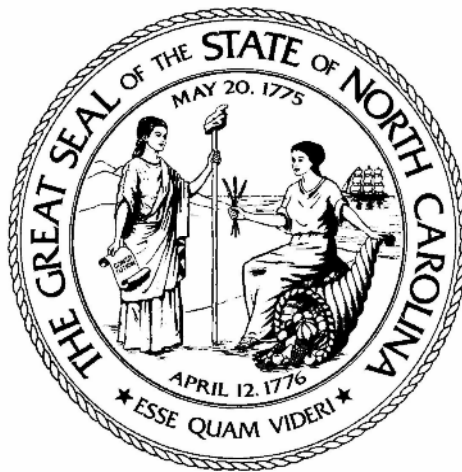
**JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION**

**ON**

**DROPOUT PREVENTION**

**AND**

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**



**REPORT TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AND THE  
2008 REGULAR SESSION OF THE 2007 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA**

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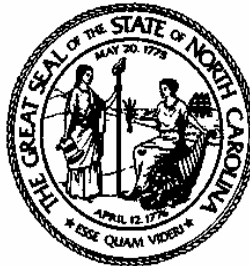
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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA



JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION  
AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

April 29, 2008

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE AND THE 2008 REGULAR SESSION OF THE 2007 GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

Attached for your consideration is the interim report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the 2008 Regular Session of the 2007 General Assembly. This report was prepared by the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation pursuant to Session Law 2007-323, Sec. 7.32(f) of the 2007 General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Earline H. Parmon".

Representative Earline Parmon, Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Vernon Malone".

Senator Vernon Malone, Chair



## ***Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation***

Sen. Albin B. Swindell IV  
North Carolina Senate  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 629  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925  
(919) 733-3030

Member

Rep. Pat B. Hurley  
North Carolina House of Representatives  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 607  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925  
(919) 733-5865

Member

Sen. Jerry W. Tillman  
North Carolina Senate  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 628  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925  
(919) 733-5870

Member

Rep. Cullie M. Tarleton  
North Carolina House of Representatives  
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2221  
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096  
(919) 733-7727

Member

### ***Staff to Commission***

Dee Atkinson, Research Division  
Drupti Chauhan, Research Division  
Shirley Iorio, Research Division  
Sara Kamprath, Research Division  
Kara McCraw, Research Division  
(919) 733-2578

Pat Christmas, Commission Assistant  
Bonnie McNeil, Commission Assistant

# **Authorizing Legislation**

## **S.L. 2007-323, sec. 7.32.(f)**

### **SECTION 7.32.(f) Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation. –**

- (1) There is created the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation (Commission) to be composed of 16 members, eight appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and eight appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The President Pro Tempore and the Speaker shall each designate a cochair from their appointees. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made.
- (2) The cochairs shall jointly call the first meeting of the Commission. A quorum of the Commission is a majority of its members.
- (3) The Commission shall:
  - a. Evaluate initiatives and programs designed to reduce the dropout rate and increase the number of students who graduate from high school prepared to further their postsecondary education or enter the workforce.
  - b. Review the research on factors related to students' success in school.
  - c. Evaluate the grants awarded under subsection (d) of this section and recommend whether any of the programs and initiatives that received one of these grants has potential for success and should be expanded or replicated.
  - d. Study the emergence of major middle school and high school reform efforts, including Learn and Earn Programs, the New Schools Initiative, and 21st Century Schools, and the impact they may have on the dropout rate.
  - e. Examine strategies, programs, and support services that should be provided if the compulsory school attendance age is raised to enable students to graduate from high school and time lines for implementing those strategies, programs, and support services.
  - f. Following a review of the courses required for graduation and the current system of awarding credit for those courses, determine whether changes should be made that better recognize the different learning rates and other needs of students.
  - g. Determine which interventions and other strategies, such as accelerated learning, tutoring, mentoring, or small class sizes, when employed as a substitute to grade retention or as a subsequent measure to grade retention, are the most effective at enabling these students to remain in school and graduate.
  - h. Study any other issue that the Commission considers relevant and appropriate.
- (4) The Legislative Services Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall assign professional and clerical staff to assist in the work of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation. The expenses of employment of the clerical staff shall be borne by the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation.
- (5) The Commission may meet at various locations around the State in order to promote greater public participation in its deliberations. The Legislative Services Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall grant to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation adequate meeting space in the State Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building.

- (6) Members of the Commission shall be paid per diem, subsistence, and travel allowances as follows:
  - a. Members who are also members of the General Assembly, at the rate established in G.S. 120-3.1;
  - b. Members who are officials or employees of the State or local government agencies, at the rate established in G.S. 138-6; and
  - c. All other members, at the rate established in G.S. 138-5.
- (7) The Commission, while in the discharge of its official duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and Article 5A of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes. The Commission may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services as provided by G.S. 20-32.02.
- (8) The Commission may submit an interim report, including any recommendations and proposed legislation, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the General Assembly by May 1, 2008, and shall submit a final written report of its findings and recommendations on or before the convening of the 2009 Session of the General Assembly. All reports shall be filed with the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Librarian. Upon filing its final report, the Commission shall terminate.



## **COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS**

The Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation met 8 times between November 13, 2007 and April 29, 2008.

### **November 13, 2007**

#### **Adoption of Budget**

*Sara Kamprath, Commission Staff*

#### **Authorizing Legislation**

*Dr. Shirley Iorio, Commission Staff*

#### **Calculating the Number of Dropouts in NC**

- Annual Dropout Rate  
*Dr. Lou Fabrizio, Director, Accountability Services, DPI*
- Cohort Graduation Rate  
*Dr. Lou Fabrizio, Director, Accountability Services, DPI*

#### **Sampling of Successful Dropout Prevention Programs**

##### **State Level Programs**

*Robert Logan, Associate State Superintendent, Innovation and School Transformation, DPI*

##### **Local Programs**

*Dr. Linda Brunson, Associate Superintendent, Clinton City Schools*

*Yvette Hawke, Executive Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program, Youth Education Program*

*Dr. Melinda Vickers, Cross Creek, Early College High*

### **January 29, 2008**

#### **Authorizing Legislation for Dropout Prevention Committee**

*Sara Kamprath, Commission Staff*

#### **Process for Awarding the Dropout Prevention Grants/List of Grantees**

*Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Senior Policy Analyst, State Board of Education*

*Mr. Marvin Pittman, Community Liaison for Student Achievement, State Board of Education*

### **February 7, 2008**

#### **North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE)**

*Mr. Eddie Davis, President, NCAE*

#### **NC Center for Public Policy Research Report on High School Dropouts in NC**

*Mebane Rash Whitman, Attorney and Editor of North Carolina Insight*

*NC Center for Public Policy Research*

## **Blue Ribbon Testing and Accountability Commission**

*Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Senior Policy Analyst, State Board of Education*

*Dr. Sam Houston, Chairman, Blue Ribbon Testing and Accountability Commission*

**February 26, 2008**

## **Update on the Annual Report on Dropout Events and Rates**

*Mr. Marvin Pittman, Community Liaison, State Board of Education*

*Robert Avossa, Area Superintendent, South Learning Community, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools*

*Mary Webb, Executive Director, Pre K-12 Support Programs, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools*

*Bill Anderson, Executive Director, Communities in Schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg*

## **NC Conference of NAACP Recommendations**

*Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, President*

*NC Conference NAACP*

## **NC Society of Hispanic Professionals Recommendations**

*Marco A. Zárate, President and Co-founder*

*North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals*

**March 13, 2008**

## **Barriers that Prevent Girls from Graduating**

*Jocelyn Samuels, Vice-president of Education & Employment, National Women's Law Center*

*Susan Cupito, Director of the Teen Parent Mentor Program, YWCA of Greensboro*

*Ann Arant, Coordinator of the Adolescent Parenting Program, Johnston County DSS*

*Tchernavia "T" Ranefore, Safe Journey Program Case Manager, Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc.*

## **Communities in Schools Initiatives**

*Linda Harrill, President*

*Communities in Schools of North Carolina*

*James Speed, CEO, NC Mutual Life Insurance Company*

*Communities in Schools of North Carolina Board member*

## **New Schools Project Initiatives**

*Tony Habit, President*

*NC New Schools Project*

**March 25, 2008**

## **Presentations from Students At-Risk of Dropping Out and Former Dropouts**

*Students from Mary E. Phillips High School in Wake County*

- *Gillian Singleton*
- *Tanika Palmer*

*Ms. Brittany Williams, Student, New Bern High School*

*Ms. Barbara Lee, Program Director*

*Area Day Reporting Center for Youth, Craven County - New Bern*

*Ms. Tova Hariston, Student Enrichment Coordinator Craven County - New Bern*

*Latifah Hodge, Community Service Program from Wake County*

*Students from Wake Technical Community College's Basic Skills Program*

- *Daniel Higgins*
- *Antwan McKoy*
- *Michael Royster\**

**SREB Report on Promising Policies/Practices for Improving Readiness and Graduation Rates**

*Dr. Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President  
Southern Regional Education Board*

**April 15, 2008**

**Commission Discussion on Findings, Recommendations and Proposed Legislation to the 2008 Session**

**April 29, 2008**

**Commission Discusses and Votes on Interim Report**

\* Michael Royster did not address the Commission. Ashley Powell, Matthew Lester, and Julius Smith, students from Wake Technical Community College's Basic Skills Program, also addressed the Commission.

## **SUMMARY OF STUDY COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS**

(In addition to these summaries, the Committee Assistant maintains a notebook containing complete committee minutes for each meeting and all information presented to the committee.)

### **November 13, 2007**

Dr. Shirley Iorio, Commission Analyst, reviewed the duties of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation in the authorizing legislation. She also reviewed the duties of the Committee on Dropout Prevention, which was charged with determining which local school administrative units, schools, agencies, and nonprofits should receive dropout prevention grants, the amount of each grant, and eligible uses of the grant funding. She also reported that the Speaker of the House of Representatives had begun an Initiative on Dropout Reform that held 12 public hearings throughout the state before the Commission began its work.

Deputy State Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction, J. B. Buxton, gave an update on the progress of the Committee on Dropout Prevention and the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. He explained that the information about the dropout prevention grants had been publicized and that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) would also get the information out to the LEAs.

Dr. Lou Fabrizio, Director, Accountability Services, DPI, was recognized and explained the difference between the annual dropout event rate and the 4-year cohort graduation rate. The annual dropout event rate is used in the State ABC's accountability system. The Commission discussed the definition of dropout used for the annual report and the reasons that students report for dropping out of school. The 4-year cohort graduation rate follows the same group of students over time from their entry into the ninth grade to 4 years later. The cohort graduation rate is required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Mr. Robert Logan, Associate State Superintendent, Innovation and School Transformation, DPI, explained the context of the work at DPI in addressing the dropout problem and current initiatives that are underway, which include:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Programs
- Dropout Prevention Grants appropriated by the N.C. General Assembly
- Learn and Earn High Schools
- Learn and Earn Online
- New Schools Project
- NC Virtual Public School
- High School Future Ready Course of Study
- High School Cohort Graduation

Mr. Logan stated research indicates that as early as third grade the profile of a potential high school dropout can be identified. The key factor in that identification is whether or not the student is reading by third grade. He further stated that successful programs have a high level of engagement with the students in a curriculum in which they are successful in learning the basic skills of writing, mathematics, and reading. The chances are greater that they will enjoy school and remain there. There is also relationship building. Successful programs have activities that are child centered and student oriented in which healthy meaningful relationships are established with students helping them to feel valued, worthy and a part of school.

Dr. Joseph Garcia, Vice President of the North Carolina New Schools Project, stated that through the leadership of the Governor, the NC General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Education Cabinet, there are schools well on the way to becoming “graduate factories”. These are schools that address the disconnection and the disinterest with school that many students exhibit before dropping out. Working with educators and local school systems across the state, two different kinds of innovative high schools have been created. They are differentiated by their location. The Learn and Earn Early Colleges are located on the campus of a two- or four-year institution and the redesigns of traditional high schools are located on traditional high school campuses. Eighty-six innovative high schools opened this year.

Ms. Melinda Vickers, Principal of Cross Creek Early College High School, spoke about the Learn and Earn school located on the campus of Fayetteville State University. The school opened in August of 2005 with 72 ninth grade students and has grown to 209 ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students in the third year of operation. She commented on some of her students and how the Learn and Earn program helped them to become successful and avoid dropping out of high school.

Shanetta Hodge, a junior at Cross Creek Early College High School, spoke on how the Learn and Earn program had helped her throughout the two years that she was enrolled. Even though she was maintaining an A and B average, Ms. Hodge explained that she was not happy in the ninth grade at a traditional high school because the large classes did not suit her.

Dr. Linda Brunson, Associate Superintendent, Clinton City Schools, shared three strategies that are used to prevent dropouts in the Clinton City Schools. They believe that all of their efforts are geared toward student success with programs such as More-at-Four, Pre-K Programs, the Middle School Literacy Coach Program and the Early College High School. Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts with a variety of options that can lead to graduation and offers programs that pay special attention to the individual social needs of each student and meets the academic requirements for a high school diploma.

Yvette Hawke, Executive Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program, Youth Education Program, described the success of the program. In 2004, a grant was received from DPI. The after-school program grew from serving 35 children to 262 children. The program is housed in Victorious Praise Church in Durham and partnered with Durham Public Schools, NC Central University, corporate sponsors, and many volunteers from church and IBM. The program serves K-12 students and works to build relationships with parents, teachers, students, and staff. Ms. Hawke stated that parent involvement is the key to the program’s success.

### **January 29, 2008**

Sara Kamprath, Commission Analyst, reviewed the membership of the Committee on Dropout Prevention and the charge of the Committee to determine which local school administrative units, schools, agencies, and non-profits would receive grants from the seven million dollars the General Assembly had appropriated in the 2007 Session. The Committee met several times before determining the grantees. Once the grants were awarded on January 18, 2008, the Committee on Dropout Prevention terminated.

Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Senior Policy Analyst, State Board of Education, explained the process that was used in selecting the dropout prevention grant recipients. First, the Committee adopted the draft application and developed the actual rubric used to review the applications. The

Committee staff led a total of three technical assistance forums. The first forum was held in Greensboro on November 8 and two other forums were held on November 19 in Wilson, NC and at the WRESA in Asheville, NC.

The Committee received 307 applications for the dropout prevention grants by the December 17<sup>th</sup> deadline. The applications were then read by 45 outside reviewers over a three day period. The Committee chose a cutoff score that the applications had to reach to be considered for funding. Ninety-one of the 307 applications scored at or above the cutoff score. The funding needed to implement all of the 91 that scored at or above the cutoff score exceeded the amount of funds available, so the Committee members selected the sixty recipients of the dropout prevention grants.

## **February 7, 2008**

Mr. Eddie Davis, President, North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), presented ten recommendations (compiled from a survey of NCAE members) that might curb the current dropout challenge. The recommendations included:

1. Early intervention also means ensuring that all students can read before they move into upper elementary school.
2. Schools must find ways to reach out to parent/guardians and involve families in students' learning at home and within the school community.
3. Targeted schools should be provided with funding for a dropout prevention coordinator.
4. Using the middle school model and the approaches that we see at the Learn and Earn schools, the 115 local districts should investigate the possibility of creating programs or school-within-schools that would allow for smaller school settings or themed academies, especially at the secondary levels.
5. Funding should be provided so that every LEA has access to quality alternative learning programs, even if these programs cross LEA lines.
6. The LEAs, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly should provide more funding for middle school and early-high school courses that will allow students to stay in school because of an interest in careers in technical, and/or vocational fields.

Mebane Rash Whitman, Attorney and Editor of North Carolina Insight, NC Center for Public Policy Research, made the following recommendations to the Commission:

1. Continue reporting of the dropout event totals and rate, and the 4-year cohort graduation rate. In addition, the Center recommends that DPI explore the possibility of calculating a 4-year cohort dropout rate.
2. The Center recommends that this Commission study the impact of raising the compulsory attendance age from age 16 to 17 or 18 as part of a policy of encouraging as many students as possible to complete high school. A majority of states now have a compulsory attendance age of 17. States such as Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, which have long had a compulsory attendance age of 18, experience lower dropout rates than North Carolina.
3. The Center recommends that DPI and the State Board update and revise the high school curricula to make it rigorous and relevant for students who might not go to college, including the provision of internships, career exploration, and service-learning opportunities.

4. With regard to the provision of dropout prevention grants, the Center recommends that the grant period be extended through the school year ending in June 2009. The Center recommends that the Dropout Prevention Grant Committee be allowed to go back through the applications and recommend additional grants that would be funded for the 2008-09 school year. All of these grants need to be evaluated by July 1, 2009.

Dr. Sam Houston, Chairman, Blue Ribbon Testing and Accountability Commission, and Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Senior Policy Analyst, State Board of Education, reported that the Commission found:

1. The current testing program and accountability system do not ensure that students are graduating from high school globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
2. The current testing program and accountability system do not reflect 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill sets.
3. Too much time is spent on testing without effective prescriptive feedback.
4. The current curriculum is too broad and not deep enough.

The system of testing in North Carolina has not proven to have an impact that has increased the graduation rate nor reduced the remediation rates at the community college or university levels.

## **February 26, 2008**

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, President of the North Carolina Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, presented recommendations for improving high school completion and decreasing the number of student dropouts. Recommendations included the following:

1. Ensure high quality, well funded, and diverse schools.
2. Provide special leadership teams in struggling schools.
3. Ensure implementation of personal education plans for at-risk students.

Marvin Pittman, Community Liaison with the State Board of Education, presented the Annual Report on Dropout Events and Rates. Mr. Pittman also presented a distribution summary of the dropout prevention grants. The Commission discussed the longitudinal data on dropout rates, the definition of dropout used for the report, and the differences between the dropout and cohort graduation rate.

Robert Avossa, Area Superintendent for the South Learning Community, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), spoke about the Charlotte-Mecklenburg data from the Annual Report on Dropout Events and Rates, and the system's plans to address the rate of student dropouts in that school system.

Mary Webb, Executive Director for Pre-K-12 Support Programs for CMS, spoke about new initiatives and programs CMS has established to decrease the rate of student dropouts, including bridge academies for middle school students, early intervention programs for four year olds and K-3, programs for English language learners, alternatives to traditional high schools, summer school programs, and performance learning centers.

Bill Anderson, the Executive Director for Communities in Schools (CIS) in Charlotte, spoke about the CIS partnership with CMS on programs to address the chronic dropout problem. These programs include ninth grade academies and a performance learning center high school. Mr. Anderson indicated that a dropout grant had been received which would be used to develop a second performance learning center.

William Crockett, Principal of Athens Drive High School in Wake County, spoke about a dropout prevention grant that Athens Drive had received to expand the school's existing ninth grade academy into the tenth grade. Mr. Crockett spoke about the extra structure provided by the ninth grade academy to at-risk students, and the program's success.

Marco A. Zárate, President of the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals, presented recommendations for decreasing Hispanic student dropouts. The recommendations included the following:

1. Provide an improved sense of belonging and support for Hispanic students by all members of the school community.
2. Improve access to advanced courses and extra-curricular activities.
3. Increase professional development to better equip teachers to serve English Language Learners.
4. Increase opportunities to access higher education.
5. Increase parental involvement.
6. Establish a dropout prevention plan at the school level.

### **March 13, 2008**

Jocelyn Samuels, Vice-President of Education & Employment of the National Women's Law Center, presented information on a recent report on the dropout crisis for girls nationally. Ms. Samuels spoke about national statistics and significant causes of female dropouts. She also presented recommendations, including the following:

1. Develop a longitudinal tracking system for graduation and dropout data, including separate tracking of pregnant and parenting students.
2. Refine the reporting system used to determine why students drop out of school.
3. Fund and encourage more research on causes of gender-based differences in high school dropouts.
4. Require schools to comply with federal and state law to ensure students are not discriminated against on the basis of pregnancy.
5. Fund research and track best practices that can be shared between school districts, and require each school district to develop a dropout prevention plan.
6. Strengthen data collection, reporting, and requirements to ensure both male and female students are not subject to harassment at school.

Susan Cupito, Director of the Teen Parent Mentor Program at the YWCA of Greensboro, provided current statistics on teen pregnancy in North Carolina and its cost and impact on graduation rates. Ms. Cupito presented recommendations to the Commission, including the following:

1. Provide transportation to school and to day care for parenting students.
2. Provide reliable homebound instruction while out of school for the birth and postpartum period.
3. Provide advocacy for teen mothers within the school system.
4. Provide comprehensive support programs within regular, rather than separate, schools for teen mothers.
5. Provide clear policies on the rights and responsibilities of teen mothers.

Ann Arant, Coordinator of the Adolescent Parenting Program with Johnston County Department of Social Services, presented information to the Commission about the Adolescent Parenting



program in Johnson County. Ms. Arant spoke about how the program worked with the school system to provide transportation, day care, and other assistance for teenage mothers.

Tchernavia "T" Ranefore, Safe Journey Program Case Manager with Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc., spoke about her personal experiences as a teenage mother and the support programs that helped her to finish high school, and encouraged efforts to promote responsibility and support for pregnant teenagers.

James Speed, CEO of NC Mutual Life Insurance Company and a Communities in Schools (CIS) of North Carolina Board member, spoke to the Commission regarding the CIS program and introduced President of CIS, Linda Harrell.

Linda Harrill, President of CIS of North Carolina, spoke to the Commission regarding the comprehensive, integrated student support services that CIS provides. Ms. Harrill also provided data on the effectiveness of CIS, and the types of strategies used by CIS, including mentoring/teaching, community collaboration, and alternative schools.

Tony Habit, President of the North Carolina New Schools Project, spoke to the Commission regarding the New Schools Project. Mr. Habit discussed the importance of teacher preparedness, effective teaching, and school structure and design in schools which successfully graduated nearly all students, and provided data on the dropout rates for schools in the New Schools Project.

### **March 25, 2008**

The first half of the meeting, the Commission heard testimony from students who were at-risk of dropping out of high school, students who had dropped out of a traditional public high school but were attending an alternative public high school, and students who had dropped out of public high school but were continuing their education at a community college.

Two students from Mary E. Phillips High School in Wake County spoke about how the smaller class sizes, on-site child care, and Saturday classes to help them study for the end-of-course tests were important to their staying in school.

Next the Commission heard about the Area Day Reporting Center for Youth in Craven County from Barbara Lee, Program Director, and Tova Hariston, Student Enrichment Coordinator. They explained that this is a recovery program that works with students on the brink of dropping out. The program is a collaboration between the Craven County Juvenile Court Counselors, law enforcement, and the Craven County Public Schools. A 9<sup>th</sup> grader at New Bern High School explained how the program had benefited her.

The Commission then heard from five students who had left Wake County Schools and were now attending or had graduated from the Basic Skills Program at Wake Technical Community College. The students talked about what was lacking at their traditional public high school and why they chose their educational alternative.

Then the chair asked that all of the students come forward to answer questions from the Commission members. The students were asked if there was anything that their traditional high school could have done differently to keep them in school. Consistent themes in the students' answers were the need for smaller classes, more one-on-one contact with teachers, and more

support from school personnel, including more counselors and social workers. The students were also asked about their future educational and career plans.

The Commission then heard from Dr. Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President of the Southern Regional Education Board, about promising practices that improve readiness for high school and improve graduation rates. Dr. Bottoms explained that some of the practices used at high schools with a 75% or higher graduation rate include:

- Require more students to complete a rigorous academic core of classes.
- Develop and assign high quality principals.
- Identify students early in the middle grades who are at-risk of not being prepared for high school and provide extra support.
- Redesign the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Provide a range of second chance opportunities to help students stay on track to graduate.

### **April 15, 2008**

Sara Kamprath, Commission Analyst, presented an overview of the proposed findings and recommendations for the Interim Report to the 2008 Session. Based on the Commission discussion, the co-chairs directed staff to make changes to the findings and recommendations for presentation to the Commission at the next meeting.

### **April 29, 2008**

Sara Kamprath, Commission Analyst, reviewed the draft copy of the interim report. The Commission discussed the proposed findings and recommendations. The Commission moved to adopt the Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the 2008 Regular Session of the 2007 General Assembly.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

The Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation makes the following findings and recommendations to the 2008 Regular Session of the 2007 General Assembly:

### **1: Plan for Providing Education and Workforce Skills Development**

The Commission recognizes the importance of providing educational alternatives for students who have dropped out of high school. The Commission heard information from the Southern Regional Education Board and the North Carolina Association of Educators that there are high-demand, high-skill, and high-wage careers that employers are unable to find trained employees to fill.

The Commission strongly encourages the State Board of Community Colleges and the State Board of Education to develop a rigorous academic and workplace skills development program for high school dropouts between the ages of sixteen and eighteen who are enrolled at a community college. The State Board of Community Colleges, in collaboration with the State Board of Education, shall report on the components of the program and a timeline for implementation of the program to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee before the convening of the 2009 Session of the General Assembly.

### **2: Early Intervention Programs**

The Commission recognizes the importance of early education initiatives that work to ensure that young children enter school healthy and ready to succeed and that high-quality pre-kindergarten services for children at-risk of school failure are critical to future academic performance and high school completion. The Commission also recognizes that reading at grade level by Grade 3 is a key predictor of high school completion and that early intervention programs that promote literacy in the early elementary years are important.

The Commission strongly recommends that the General Assembly continue to fund More-at-Four and Smart Start early intervention programs for at-risk students, and to expand these programs.

### **3: High School Redesign**

The Commission encourages local boards of education to consider innovative and non-traditional high school designs to meet the needs of all students, especially ninth graders. The Commission heard information from the North Carolina New Schools Project, the North Carolina Association of Educators, Communities in Schools, The North Carolina Center for Public Policy, and the Southern Regional Education Board, and finds that innovative and non-traditional high school designs can strengthen retention of students in schools and reduce failure rates.

The Commission strongly urges that serious consideration be given to Ninth Grade Academies, smaller school settings such as schools within a school, themed academies, and flexible school schedules such as evening academies.

### **4: Parental Involvement and Communication Between Schools and Parents**

The Commission believes that parental involvement is important to student educational achievement. The Commission heard information from the North Carolina Center for Public Policy, the North Carolina Association of Educators, and the North Carolina Society of Hispanic

Professionals, and finds that parental involvement in children's education encourages student success in school.

The Commission believes that it is critical that parents be informed about a school's expectations for students; especially course offerings such as advanced and honors courses, Personal Education Plans, graduation requirements and any changes to those requirements, and the availability of extracurricular activities.

The Commission encourages principals, teachers, and organizations that promote parent, family and community involvement in the education of all children to develop methods to reach out to parents and guardians to involve them in student learning at home and at school.

The Commission also strongly encourages local Chamber of Commerce education committees to develop and promote programs to encourage local employers to invest in local community school systems by providing flexibility to employees for involvement in school activities and volunteer efforts without penalty, and by engaging in cooperative efforts with schools to promote parental involvement in education.

The Commission also encourages local media to expand reporting on achievements and accomplishments within local community school systems and on the positive involvement of parents within those systems.

The Commission recommends that the General Assembly enact legislation to appropriate funds for Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. to place no fewer than 100 graduation coaches in either middle or high schools. When placing the graduation coaches, Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. shall give priority to schools that have a 4-year cohort graduation rate of less than 65%. See attached DRAFT LEGISLATION: 2007-RJz-13.

## **5: School Climate and School Safety**

The Commission believes that safe learning environments are critical to encouraging students to stay in school. The Commission heard information from the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals, the National Women's Law Center, and the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina, and finds that fostering a learning environment free from harassment, bullying, and violence that is welcoming to all students promotes a climate for educational success.

The Commission encourages superintendents, principals, and teachers to ensure that the climate of their schools is welcoming to all students and provides a safe learning environment. The Commission also encourages the enforcement of local board policies and procedures to prevent acts of harassment, bullying, or discrimination.

The Commission strongly recommends that the Office of Professional Development, under the State Board of Education, promote professional development that helps superintendents, principals, and teachers make learning more relevant for culturally diverse populations and for local boards of education to encourage superintendents, principals, and teachers to seek out this professional development.

## **6: Rigorous Academic Courses and Less Remediation**

The Commission recognizes that remediating students who have fallen behind is not a successful strategy. The Commission heard information from the Southern Regional Education Board, and

finds that high expectations and a program of rigorous instruction and support promotes academic success for students who are at-risk of dropping out of high school.

The Commission strongly encourages schools to promote high expectations and offer rigorous instruction and support for students identified as not being prepared for coursework at the next grade level.

The Commission also encourages high schools to offer all students a rigorous academic core of courses and access to academically challenging courses such as Advanced Placement and Honors classes.

## **7: Career and Technical Education (CTE) Courses**

The Commission recommends that schools should enhance their Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in middle school and high school for all students. The Commission heard information from the Southern Regional Education Board and the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina, and finds that involvement in career and technical education course work where students find relevancy between academic work and future careers is effective at decreasing student dropouts.

The Commission strongly encourages schools to offer high-quality CTE courses in high-demand, high-skill, and high-wage fields. The Commission also strongly encourages schools to ensure equal access for girls in rigorous training for high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-need professions and to encourage girls to pursue nontraditional female jobs.

## **8: Impact of Raising the Compulsory Attendance Age**

The Commission heard information from the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, and finds that the impact of raising the compulsory attendance from sixteen to seventeen or eighteen should be studied. The Commission recommends that the General Assembly direct the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to study raising the compulsory attendance age for public school attendance from sixteen to seventeen or eighteen. The study should examine other states that have raised the compulsory attendance age to determine all impacts, including the effect on the dropout rate and the fiscal impact. The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall report to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by November 15, 2008. See attached DRAFT LEGISLATION: 2007-TCz-8.

## **9: Differences in Risk Factors that Lead to Males and Females Dropping Out**

The Commission heard information from the National Women's Law Center, and finds that further information is needed on the differences in risk factors for failure to complete high school by males and females. The Commission encourages the UNC Board of Governors to conduct research to determine if there are gender-based differences in the factors which cause males and females to drop out of school, and if there are gender-based intervention strategies to prevent males and females from dropping out of school.

## **10: Dropout Prevention Grants**

The Commission believes that the current dropout rate is unacceptable and that some innovative programs that may succeed in helping students to stay in school and graduate were not funded. The Commission also believes that it is important to determine the effectiveness of the funded programs and to identify sustainable, replicable, and scalable models. The Commission learned that there is currently no source of technical assistance to aid in the implementation of the dropout prevention programs that were funded.

The Commission strongly recommends that the General Assembly enact legislation to appropriate funds for additional dropout prevention grants, to reestablish the Committee on Dropout Prevention to evaluate the impact of the dropout prevention grants, and to appropriate funds for an independent consultant to staff the Committee and provide technical assistance to the grant recipients. The Committee shall report the results of its evaluations to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. See attached DRAFT LEGISLATION: 2007-RJz-9.

The Commission also strongly recommends that the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation should be continued to monitor both existing and future grants. See attached DRAFT LEGISLATION: 2007-RJz-10.

### **11: Family Responsibilities**

The Commission recognizes that family responsibilities make it difficult for some students to stay in school and graduate. The Commission heard information from the National Women's Law Center and the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina, and finds that students who face these challenges may need additional support to graduate. Such support and services might include on-site child care, transportation, and the expansion of adolescent parenting programs.

**Legislative Proposal I**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**SESSION 2007**

**U**

**D**

**BILL DRAFT 2007-RJz-13 [v.3] (04/27)**

**(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)**

**5/1/2008 12:39:37 PM**

Short Title: Communities in Schools Funds.

(Public)

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Sponsors: .

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Referred to:

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A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC., PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND TO PLACE NO FEWER THAN 100 GRADUATION COACHES IN EITHER MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOLS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction the sum of six million twenty-four thousand ninety-one dollars (\$6,024,091) for the 2008-2009 fiscal year in recurring funds to support and expand the programs and services of Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., a public and private partnership that addresses the multiple needs of students at the greatest risk of dropping out of schools. Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., shall use the funds to leverage federal and private grants to support local Communities in School programs throughout the State and to place no fewer than 100 graduation coaches in either middle or high schools. When placing graduation coaches, Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. shall give priority to schools that have a 4-year cohort graduation rate of less than 65%.

The graduation coaches shall:

- (1) Identify and coordinate appropriate academic assistance and support for students at-risk of dropping out of school;
- (2) Refer at-risk students to other school personnel such as counselors, social workers, and nurses who can address problems that might prevent a student from graduating;
- (3) Recruit mentors and tutors from the local community to work with at-risk students to help keep them on track to graduate;

## **Legislative Proposal I**

- 1           (4)       Initiate contact with parents and guardians of at-risk students,  
2                   provide regular updates of the student's academic progress, and  
3                   encourage parental involvement in student academic endeavors;
- 4           (5)       Provide information to at-risk students and their parents or  
5                   guardians about graduation requirements, support services to help  
6                   students not performing at grade level, advanced and honors  
7                   courses, opportunities for higher education and worker training  
8                   after graduation; and
- 9           (6)       Refer students requiring services relating to substance abuse,  
10                   domestic violence, family planning, or mental health to appropriate  
11                   providers where medically accurate information will be provided  
12                   and appropriate services are available.

13           **SECTION 2.** Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. shall report on  
14 the activities of the graduation coaches to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout  
15 Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight  
16 Committee by October 15, 2009 and annually thereafter.

17           **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2008.



**Legislative Proposal II**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2007**

**U**

**D**

**BILL DRAFT 2007-TCz-8 [v.2] (04/16)**

**(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)  
4/28/2008 3:46:18 PM**

Short Title: Study Raising Compulsory Attendance Age.

(Public)

Sponsors: .

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA TO STUDY THE IMPACTS OF RAISING THE COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FROM SIXTEEN TO SEVENTEEN OR EIGHTEEN, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, in coordination with the Department of Public Instruction, shall study the impacts of raising the compulsory public school attendance age from sixteen to seventeen or eighteen. In its study, the Board of Governors shall consider all of the following:

- (1) What impacts, including fiscal impacts, has raising the compulsory school attendance age had in states which have raised the compulsory school attendance age in the last fifteen years.
- (2) What conclusions can be drawn as to the impact the compulsory school attendance age has made in the dropout and high school completion rates for states who require compulsory school attendance to ages sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, respectively.
- (3) What best practices for working with at-risk populations of students who remain in school have been employed in states that have raised the compulsory attendance age in the last fifteen years.
- (4) What would be the fiscal impact in raising the compulsory school attendance age from sixteen to seventeen and sixteen to eighteen, respectively, for each local administrative school unit in North Carolina.

## **Legislative Proposal II**

1           **SECTION 2.** No later than November 15, 2008, the Board of Governors of  
2 The University of North Carolina shall submit a report of its study to the Joint  
3 Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the  
4 Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, including its findings and  
5 recommendations.

6           **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.  
7

**Legislative Proposal III**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2007**

U

D

**BILL DRAFT 2007-RJz-9 [v.9] (04/09)**

**(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)  
5/1/2008 12:44:51 PM**

Short Title: Reestablish Com. on Dropout Prevention/Funds.

(Public)

Sponsors: .

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO REESTABLISH THE COMMITTEE ON DROPOUT PREVENTION TO  
AWARD ADDITIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION GRANTS, TO  
APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE GRANTS, AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS  
FOR A CONSULTANT TO STAFF THE COMMITTEE, AS RECOMMENDED  
BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION  
AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Committee. – The Committee on Dropout Prevention, as established in S.L. 2007-323, Section 7.32(c), is reestablished. The Committee shall be located administratively in the Department of Public Instruction but shall exercise its powers and duties independently of the Department of Public Instruction. The Department of Public Instruction shall provide for the administrative costs of the Committee. The Department of Public Instruction shall contract with an independent consultant to serve as staff to the Committee, to provide technical assistance to the grant recipients for the length of the grant and to assist the Committee in evaluating the impact of the grants awarded.

The Committee shall determine which local school administrative units, schools, agencies, and nonprofits shall receive dropout prevention grants under Section 2 of this act, the amount of each grant, and eligible uses of the grant funding. The Committee shall consist of the following 15 members:

- (1) The Governor shall appoint five members, of whom one is a superintendent of schools, one is a representative of a nonprofit, and one is a school social worker;
- (2) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint five members, of whom one is a principal, one is a representative of a school of education, and one is a school counselor; and

### **Legislative Proposal III**

- 1           (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint five  
2           members, of whom one is a teacher, one is a member of the business  
3           community, and one is a representative of the juvenile justice system.

4           The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of  
5   Representatives shall each designate a cochair of the Committee. The members of the  
6   Committee shall assure they are in compliance with laws and rules governing conflicts  
7   of interest. The Committee shall meet on the call of the cochairs provided that the  
8   Committee shall meet at least once every three months.

9           **SECTION 2.** Dropout Prevention Grants. – The Committee shall select  
10   grant recipients from applications received in the process outlined in Section 7.32(d) of  
11   S.L. 2007-323. Using the existing grant reviews, the Committee shall establish a cut-off  
12   score and award grants to applicants that both meet the cut-off score and did not  
13   previously receive funding under S.L. 2007-323.

14          The following criteria apply to dropout prevention grants approved by the  
15   Committee established under Section 1 of this act.

- 16          (1) Grants shall be issued in varying amounts up to a maximum of one  
17          hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000).  
18          (2) These grants shall be provided to innovative programs and initiatives  
19          that target students at risk of dropping out of school and that  
20          demonstrate the potential to (i) be developed into effective,  
21          sustainable, and coordinated dropout prevention and reentry programs  
22          in middle schools and high schools, and (ii) serve as effective models  
23          for other programs.  
24          (3) Priority shall be given to new programs and initiatives or to those that  
25          have begun within the last five school years.  
26          (4) Grants shall be distributed geographically throughout the State.  
27          (5) Grants may be made to local school administrative units, schools, local  
28          agencies, or nonprofit organizations.  
29          (6) Grants shall be to programs and initiatives that hold all students to  
30          high academic and personal standards.  
31          (7) Grant applications shall state (i) how grant funds will be used, (ii)  
32          what, if any, other resources will be used in conjunction with the grant  
33          funds, (iii) how the program or initiative will be coordinated to  
34          enhance the effectiveness of existing programs, initiatives, or services  
35          in the community, and (iv) a process for evaluating the success of the  
36          program or initiative.  
37          (8) Programs and initiatives that receive grants under this subsection shall  
38          be based on best practices for preventing students from dropping out of  
39          school or for increasing the high school completion rate for those  
40          students who already have dropped out of school.  
41          (9) Priority for grants shall be given to proposals that demonstrate input  
42          from the local community and coordination with other available  
43          programs or resources.

### **Legislative Proposal III**

1           (10) Grantees shall assure their compliance with applicable laws and rules  
2           regulating conflicts of interest.

3           (11) Priority for grants shall be given to programs that would serve students  
4           in local school administrative units that have a 4-year cohort  
5           graduation rate of less than sixty-five percent (65%).

6           (12) Grants shall be made no later than November 1, 2008.

7           The Committee shall report to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout  
8           Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight  
9           Committee on the grants awarded under this act by March 1, 2009.

10          **SECTION 3.** Evaluation. – The Committee shall evaluate the impact of the  
11          dropout prevention grants awarded under S.L. 2007-323 and under Section 2 of this act.  
12          In evaluating the impact of the grants, the Committee shall consider:

13           (1) How grant funds were used, including the services provided for teen  
14           pregnancy prevention and for pregnant and parenting teens;

15           (2) What, if any, other resources were used in conjunction with the grant  
16           funds;

17           (3) How the program or initiative was coordinated to enhance the  
18           effectiveness of existing programs, initiatives, or services in the  
19           community;

20           (4) The success of the program or initiative, as indicated by the evaluation  
21           process stated in its grant application;

22           (5) The sustainability of the program;

23           (6) The number, gender, ethnicity, and grade level of students being  
24           served as well as whether the student left school due to pregnancy or  
25           parenting responsibilities.

26           (7) For those grant recipients using money for health education programs,  
27           whether those programs include comprehensive sexuality education  
28           and medically accurate information about contraceptives including  
29           abstinence.

30           (8) The potential for the program to serve as a model; and

31           (9) Other indicators of the impact of the grant on dropout prevention.

32          The recipients of the dropout prevention grants awarded under S.L. 2007-323  
33          shall report to the Committee on Dropout Prevention by January 31, 2009 and by  
34          September 30, 2009. The Committee shall make an interim report of the results of its  
35          evaluation of the grants awarded under S.L. 2007-323 by March 31, 2009 to the Joint  
36          Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and to the  
37          Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The Committee shall make a final  
38          report of the results of its evaluation of the grants awarded under S.L. 2007-323 by  
39          November 15, 2009 to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and  
40          High School Graduation and to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

41          The recipients of the dropout prevention grants awarded under Section 2 of  
42          this act shall report to the Committee on Dropout Prevention by January 31, 2010 and  
43          by September 30, 2010. The Committee shall make an interim report of the results of  
44          its evaluation of the grants awarded under Section 2 of this bill by March 31, 2010 to

### **Legislative Proposal III**

1 the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation  
2 and to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The Committee shall  
3 make a final report of the results of its evaluation of the grants awarded under Section 2  
4 of this act by November 15, 2010 to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout  
5 Prevention and High School Graduation and to the Joint Legislative Education  
6 Oversight Committee.

7 **SECTION 4.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
8 Department of Public Instruction, Committee on Dropout Prevention, the sum of five  
9 million five hundred thousand dollars (\$5,500,000) for the 2008-2009 fiscal year to  
10 provide for 40 additional dropout prevention grants to be awarded in accordance with  
11 Section 2 of this act.

12 **SECTION 5.** Funds appropriated for the dropout prevention grants for the  
13 2007-2008 fiscal year shall not revert on December 31, 2008 but shall remain available  
14 for expenditure until August 31, 2009. Funds appropriated for the 2008-2009 fiscal  
15 year shall not revert on June 30, 2009 but shall remain available for expenditure until  
16 August 31, 2010.

17 **SECTION 6.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
18 Department of Public Instruction, Committee on Dropout Prevention, the sum of one  
19 hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for the 2008-2009 fiscal year to issue a request for  
20 proposals from qualified vendors on a competitive basis to contract with a consultant to  
21 staff the Committee, assist with the evaluation and provide technical assistance. The  
22 factors to be considered in awarding the contract shall be identified in the request for  
23 proposals.

24 **SECTION 7.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2008.

**Legislative Proposal IV**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2007**

**U**

**D**

**BILL DRAFT 2007-RJz-10 [v.6] (04/10)**

**(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)  
4/28/2008 4:36:15 PM**

Short Title: Continue the Dropout Prevention Commission.

(Public)

Sponsors: .

Referred to:

**A BILL TO BE ENTITLED**

**AN ACT TO CONTINUE THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON  
DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION, AS  
RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON  
DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.**

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Section 7.32 (f)(8) of S.L. 2007-323 reads as rewritten:

(8) The Commission shall submit an interim written report of its findings and recommendations on or before the convening of the 2009 Session of the General Assembly. The Commission may submit an interim report, including any recommendations and proposed legislation, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the General Assembly by May 1, 2010 and shall submit a final written report of its findings and recommendations on or before the convening of the 2011 Session of the General Assembly. All reports shall be filed with the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Librarian. Upon filing its final report, the Commission shall terminate.

**SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.

